

Carrare;

THE

IRONSTEED.

A POEM.

BY PAYNE KENYON KILBOURN

Ha! — mark the flash, and list the roar! — He comes — the wizard of the sea and shore!

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TO THE

REV. JOHN PIERPONT,

OF BOSTON,

EMINENT AS A POET, PHILANTHOPIST AND DIVINE,

THIS POEM

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.



THIE HRON STEED.

Who thus o'er the foaming flood doth glide?
No sail propels his course;
He heeds not the winds with their sway of pride—
He asks no boon of the haughty tide,
But mocks at the breakers hoarse!

SIGOURNEY.

I.

Our fathers—our fathers—they sleep 'neath the mold;

A ban to the tongue that would libel the dead!

They were faithful and true—they were valiant and bold—

For their kindred and country they battled and bled. Like us, when the fiat was spoken above,

They sprang into being from darkness and dust;

As warm in their friendships—as constant in love—

They lived as we live, and they died as we must!

H.

Ever ready to peril their lives for the Right,

They constructed their laws on the Puritan plan;

And, fervent and fearless, they sought with their

might

The glory of God and the welfare of man.

Despising the greatness of titles and birth,

In the steps of their fathers they fearlessly trod;

They turned from the fictions and follies of earth,

And sought for the wisdom that cometh from God.

III.

The secrets of Science, which HE had concealed,
'T were a sin in their view to attempt to explore;
Whatever the Bible and Nature revealed,
They received with thanksgiving, and sought for no more!

"Never pick at the lock where no key has been given,"

Was a maxim they cherished from childhood to age;

And they reverenced its truth as the mandate of Heaven,

And scorned the researches of skeptic and sage!

IV.

They remembered the precept, "Six days shalt thou labor,"

And obeyed its requirements with reverence and awe;

Each sought with delight for the good of his neighbor,
And was bold in defence of Religion and Law.

On each Sabbath-day morning, the rustic civilian Accoutred and curried "old dobin" with care;

Himself on the saddle, his wife on the pillion,

They hurried away to the mansion of prayer.

V.

As they galloped along, said the dame to her lord:

"What a mighty improvement!—it seems like a

dream!—

Since our dear wedding-day when, with happy accord,

We were drawn to the church by a lazy ox-team!

Up the hills—down the dales—with the swiftness

of wind—

How gallant and gaily together we go!

See, see! how we leave all the neighbors behind;
Our fathers and mothers — they never went so!"

VI.

In the night of tradition — as Homer hath sung —
The Greeks had long battled their foemen in vain;
O'er the flower of their armies the knell had been rung,

Nor the thunders of conflict could rouse them again!

Nor helmet nor armor could ward off the stroke,

When Hector and Priam sent homeward the blow;

So they built them a war-horse of cedar and oak,

And made him their "consul" to treat with the
foe!

VII.

Through the realm of the Trojans destruction was stayed,

And festival mirth filled their joyful abodes;

The wooden-horse entered, and Troy was betrayed,
And the heroes of Greece were enrolled with her
gods!

Ha! had they but known of the steed of our times, So mighty in conquest as never to yield,

They had laughed at Deceit, as the vilest of crimes, And reaped their renown upon Victory's field!

VIII.

Ay, there was a day when the "dumb ass" of Baalam

Out spake to the prophet in language of men!—
And there was a time when the witches of Salem
Bestrided their broom-sticks and rode o'er the fen!
And perchance in the dim distant future may rise
Some mighty translator of mystical lore,
Who will harness his steeds for exploring the skies,
And drive them where steeds ne'er were driven
before!

IX.

'T was a glorious union when Nature and Science,

By the goddess of Art, to the altar were led!—

The Iron Steed sprang from the hallowed alliance,

And forth on his errand of glory he sped.

All hail! to the Iron Steed, now and forever! 7

He will browse on the forest, and drink from the river,

And work night and day without stopping to rest!

X.

Who so faithful and fearlesss in battle as he!

His harness is ringing—he pants for the fight!

Woe, woe, to the warrior, on shore or on sea,

When th' invincible war-horse goes forth in his might!

Unblenching, and true to his terrible trust,

He tramples alike on the living and slain!

He grindeth the face of the foe in the dust,

And the dying man pleadeth for mercy in vain!

XI.

With the breathings of flame, and the roar of the thunder,

He is winding his way o'er prairie and mountain;
The gaunt wolf looks out from his covert with wonder,

And the red man awakes from his dream by the fountain!

The steed of the desert, which ever before

Unrivalled had roamed o'er his wilderness-track,

Sees his glory eclipsed, — he shall lord it no more,

For the fearful invader hath beckoned him back!

XII.

Ever on — ever on — like the sun in its course —

O'er the sands of the line, and the snows of the pole,

Unwasted, unwearied, the huge Iron Horse

Speedeth on, as the racer speeds on to his goal!

His footstep is heard on the Russian domains,

By the lords of the Kremlin, the serfs of the

Czar;

How swiftly he sweeps o'er the ice-covered plains,
Where the rein-deer once trode his lone journey
afar!

XIII.

What a clatter of hoofs!—what a rattling and din!—

What a whirling of chariot-wheels follow his track!

He reaches the sea, and he plunges in,
And receding shores echo his winnowings back.

And away o'er the waters exulting he speeds,

With his rivited lungs and his sinews of steel;

In swiftness outstripping the fleetest of steeds,

And tossing the foam in the wake of his keel!

XIV.

The islanders hailed his approach from afar,

As the mightiest monster they ever set eyes on;

'T was a presage of wrath, or an omen of war,

And they watched it, and prayed, till it met the horizon.

Still nearer, still brighter, the lurid light shines!

There's a sound on the air, and a wake on the wave!—-

Old Neptune, affrighted, his sceptre resigns,

And dives down the deep to his nethermost cave.

XV.

What a shudder of gloom — what a fearful commotion —

O'ertakes the poor hind in his birchen canoe,
When the dimness of night settles down on the
ocean,

And the terrible torch blazes red on his view!

He watches the light, as he sees it advancing,—

He lists, and a hoarse breathing breaks on his ear;

And a sound as of armies of war-horses prancing,

And a plunging and roar, marked the monster's

career!

XVI.

The Mermaids were singing a dirge o'er the wreck
Of a gaily-rigged schooner, whose crew were all
drowed:

But they threw down their lyres, and deserted the deck,

As they heard in the distance the horrible sound.

The sea-serpent paused, on his cruise to Nahant,

As he heard the huge fellow away in his rear;

With a shake of his head, and his eyes all aslant,

He whispered, "What doeth the land-lubber here!"

XVII.

The weather-worn tar, who had buffetted long

The wrath of the seas, and the frowns of the world,

Yet ever had welcomed them all with a song,

And drank to his love when the canvass was

furled,—

Even he looked perplexed, and grew pale in his turn,

As he took down his glass for a closer inspection,

And eyed the "strange craft" from its stem to its

stern,

His judgment vibrating from fear to reflection.

XVIII.

He had danced on the deep to the music of storms,

And laughed till the darkness and tempest were

o'er;

He had looked upon Death in its fearfullest forms, But he never had met such a monster before.

At the stranger's approach his ambition was stirred,

And he sang, as the shrouds to the zephyrs were

cast.

"Bear away! bear away! spread the sails to the gales,

The "True Yankee" sailer was never yet past!

XIX.

There are fancies and facts which the muse may not mention,

All recorded and vouched for again and again,

How the tribes of the deep met in solemn convention,

And humbly implored him to leave their domain.

And tradition yet tells of the hosts that assembled, In order of battle, from regions afar;

And the water-nymphs wept, and the ocean-gods trembled,

As the Triton-trumps sounded the summons to war!

XX.

Make way for the Iron Steed! — hither he comes,
With the freight of all kingdoms and climes
richly laden;

He beareth the exiled away from their homes—
He bringeth the lost lover back to his maiden!
He cometh—he goeth! How widely apart
We are torn, ere the tears of departure are dry!
The herald of gladness to many a heart—
How many will hail his approach with a sigh!

XXI.

Unscathed by the tempest, unharmed by the flood,

He must speed on his way till his mission shall

cease;

In Battle, the fiercest avenger of blood,

Yet swiftest to carry the message of Peace!

He must haste—he must haste—to the nations benighted,

And scatter the darkness that broods in their skies,

Till the lamps of the Cross on their altars are lighted,

And Death, the pale steed of the battle-field dies!

XXII.

The Chains of Attraction have hitherto bound him, -

How glorious his flight, from his trammels set free!

Though a giant when viewed by the mites that surround him,

He's an infant to what he hereafter may be!

He must grope on his way mid these perishing

things,

And tread with rude step o'er his kindred that were,

Till the angel of Science shall give to him wings,

And mark out his path through the regions of air!



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